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Gun Show Talking Points

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

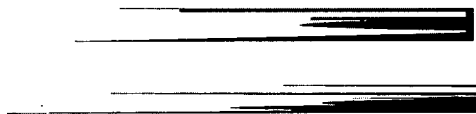
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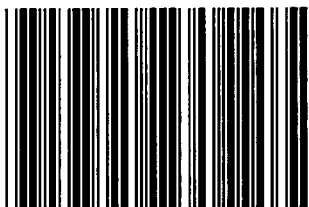
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_____ Gun Show Talking Points:

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BAUCUS

Gun Show Talking Points:

- ▶ It's important to keep this issue in context and ask ourselves what is the problem that we are trying to address? The answer to that is clear – we have a serious problem with youth violence. The tragedies in Littleton, like the death of Jeremy Bullock in Montana, make that abundantly clear.
- ▶ O.K., so how do we address that problem?
- ▶ If we want to address youth violence, we need to start at the ground level. From talking with school kids in Montana, from talking with parents and from talking with Montana law enforcement, it's clear to me that the solution starts with individual responsibility. Kids need to take responsibility for themselves. Parents need to take responsibility for their kids. Schools and local governments need to take responsibility for the safety of our classrooms and our communities.
- ▶ It's the role of the federal government to provide local communities, schools, parents and children with the tools necessary to address this problem at the local level, in communities.
- ▶ In the last week, I voted for a comprehensive program to do just that:
 - ▶ I voted to allow local communities to hire more police (\$100 million for cops in schools -- Leahy amendment - failed).
 - ▶ I voted to provide grants so that schools could hire more counselors (100,000 new counselors – Wellstone amendment - failed).
 - ▶ I voted to provide funding for after-school programs (\$600 million/4 years -- Boxer amendment - failed).
 - ▶ I voted to make it illegal for juveniles to possess assault weapons and voted to increase the penalties for folks who illegally transfer guns or ammunition to children (Ashcroft amendment - passed)
 - ▶ I voted to make sure that parents who put trigger locks on their guns and store their guns in gun lockers are rewarded by being protected from lawsuits (Kohl amendment - passed).
- ▶ I could not, however, support the proposal to regulate gun shows. Having been to gun shows in Montana, I just didn't think this proposal made sense.
 - ▶ First, gun shows aren't set up for these kind of background checks. They take place in civic centers and on weekends. It's not like a gun store, which can be constantly connected to the NICS system.

- ▶ Second, this proposal wasn't targeted at addressing juvenile violence.
- ▶ Finally, I didn't think this was an appropriate role for the federal government. If a state wants to regulate a gun-show, it can do so. I didn't think it made sense for the federal government to require gun shows, which aren't set up for the task, to complete background checks on every gun transaction during, and in many instances after the show.

Background:

Last week, Democrats put forth a proposal by Senator Lautenberg to require background checks for all sales at gun shows. This proposal was rejected by a largely party line vote of 51-47.

Baucus and Burns both voted against Lautenberg:

Two days later, the Republican caucus reversed course and put forth a proposal by Senator Hatch that also would require background checks for all sales at gun shows. This proposal was approved 48-47. **Baucus voted against this proposal. Burns voted for this proposal to regulate gun shows.**

Today, the Democrats brought a slightly modified version of Lautenberg's amendment back to the floor. This time the vote was tied 50-50. Vice President Gore broke the tie by voting in favor of the amendment. **Baucus and Burns both voted against Lautenberg.**

Tough Questions:

Q1. Max, last year you voted against trigger locks. Why did you switch your position and vote for trigger locks this year?

A1. Last year, there was a proposal that would have required gun stores to sell trigger locks or gun storage devices with all handgun sales. To me, this proposal didn't quite hit the mark and I voted against it.

I believe that we want to encourage parents to responsibly store their guns so that children can't get access to them. Simply requiring every parent to purchase a trigger lock or a gun storage locker wouldn't accomplish that purpose -- trigger locks and gun storage devices will work only if they are used.

This year, we considered a different proposal. This proposal -- a Republican/Democrat compromise, stated that gun stores had to sell these devices, but critically, the proposal said that parents who use these devices cannot be sued if the gun is stolen and used in the commission of a crime. To me, that makes sense. If a parent is responsible and uses one of these devices, it's only fair that we would agree to protect them from lawsuits. To me, this is a very different proposal from the one that we considered last year.

Q2. Max, why did you vote for final passage on the bill if you opposed the gun show provision?

A2. Everyone agrees that we need to address the root causes of youth violence. This bill was a comprehensive package targeted at this problem. It included grants to help local communities prevent youth violence, increase penalties for adults who illegally transfer guns to our kids, funding for police to purchase new crime prevention equipment, and numerous other programs. I disagree with the Senate's decision to include the gun show prohibition in this bill -- I voted against this proposal three times and was the only Democrat to do so. But, on the whole, I support the purposes of this legislation and believe that it will help reduce the level of youth violence in our country.